

GOP.gov

**HOUSE REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE**

J.C. WATTS, JR.  
CHAIRMAN  
4<sup>th</sup> District, Oklahoma

*Reforming Washington  
Securing America's Future*

**FloorPrep**  
**Legislative Digest**

**Monday, July 17, 2000**

*The House will meet at 12:30 p.m. for Morning Hour  
and 2:00 p.m. for Legislative Business  
(No votes before 6:00 p.m.)*

*Anticipated Floor Action:*

**H.R. 3125—Internet Gambling Prohibition Act of 2000**

**H.R. 4437—Semipostal Authorization Act**

**H.R. 3985—Designating the “Vicki Coceano Post Office Building”**

**H.Res. 534—Expressing the Sense of the House of Representatives on the  
Recent Nuclear Weapons Security Failures at Los Alamos National  
Laboratory**

**H.R. 728—The Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 1999**

**H.Con.Res. 319—Congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the 10th anniversary of the Reestablishment of Its Independence**

**H.Res. 531—Condemning the 1994 Attack on the AMIA Jewish Community  
Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina**

**H.R. 4810—Marriage Tax Penalty Relief Reconciliation Act of 2000  
(Resolving differences with the Senate)**



**Bills Under Suspension of the Rules**

**Floor Situation:** The House will consider the following seven bills under suspension of the rules as its first order of business today. Each is debatable for 40 minutes, may not be amended, and requires a two-thirds majority vote for passage.

**H.R. 3125** amends the federal criminal code to make it unlawful for people to use the Internet or any other computer service to: (1) place, receive or otherwise make a bet or wager; or (2) send,

receive or invite information assisting in placing a bet or wager. The measure prescribes penalties associated with violating this law. H.R. 3125 also grants district courts original and exclusive jurisdiction to prevent violations of the bill, provides enforcement authority for violations committed on Indian lands, and authorizes limited injunctive relief against a provider.

The bill contains a number of exceptions to these Internet gambling prohibitions. For example: (1) service providers are exempt from this act provided that upon being notified that their service is being used for Internet gambling they terminate access to that site, not knowingly permit their sites to be used for Internet gambling, and maintain a written policy of terminating sites that violate this bill; (2) providers are exempt from liability for content furnished by other people if providers follow certain guidelines; and (3) exceptions for certain Internet activities such as betting on legal horse and dog racing.

The Internet Gambling Prohibition Act states that no part of its language will be used to require an Internet Service Provider (ISP) to monitor material or use of its service, or, except when required by notice, to remove or disable access to material. The bill also requires the Attorney General to submit to Congress (1) an analysis of the problems associated with enforcing the bill; (2) recommendations for the best way to use Justice Department resources to enforce the bill; and (3) an estimate of the amount of activity and money being used to gamble on the Internet. The CBO estimates that H.R. 3125 will have no significant impact on the federal budget. The bill was introduced by Mr. Goodlatte on October 21, 1999 and was reported by the Judiciary Committee by a vote of 21 to 8 on April 6, 2000.

**H.R. 4437** authorizes the Postal Service to sell ‘semipostals,’ which are a postage stamp issued and sold by the Postal Service at a premium in order to help provide funding for an appropriate matter of national interest (e.g., breast cancer). This gives the Postal Service the ability to issue such stamps without necessitating legislation by Congress. The premium rate is determined by the Postal Service board of governors, and can be up to the normal rate of postage plus a differential not to exceed 25 percent.

The funds raised will be transferred to an agency or agencies under arrangements made with the Postal Service. H.R. 4437 gives the Postal Service the authority to issue regulations, using the standard notice and comment method for rule making, necessary to carry out this measure. Also, the bill requires that the Postal Service to include information about activities under the Semipostal Act in its annual reports, as well as requiring any agencies that receives funds from semipostal sales to submit annual written reports to congressional committees with jurisdiction over the Postal Service documenting: (1) the total funds received from semipostal sales; (2) how those funds were allocated; and (3) a description of any advances or accomplishments achieved from use of the funds. The bill also mandates that the GAO issue an interim report on the operation of the semipostal program four years after semipostals become available, as well as a final report to Congress six months before the program is scheduled to terminate. Finally, the legislation extends the existing authority to sell semipostals for breast cancer research to July 29, 2002, or for two years after this bill is enacted. At press time a CBO cost estimate was not available. The bill was introduced by Mr. McHugh on May 11, 2000 and was reported by the Government Reform Committee by voice vote on June 29, 2000.

**H.R. 3985** designates the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 14900 Southwest 30<sup>th</sup> Street in Miramar City, Florida, as the “Vicki Coceano Post Office Building.” Any reference

in a law, map, regulation, document, paper or other record of the United States to this facility shall be deemed to be a reference to the “Vicki Coceano Post Office Building.” The bill was introduced by Mr. Hastings on March 15, 2000 and was not considered by a committee.

**H.Res. 534** expresses the sense of the House that the security failures at the Los Alamos National Laboratory revealed to Congress on June 9, 2000, demonstrate the continued inadequacy of nuclear weapons security policy and procedures within the National Nuclear Security Administration and at the Administration’s other nuclear research facilities. The individuals responsible for the implementation, oversight, and management of nuclear weapons security policy and procedures within the Administration and at its facilities must be held accountable for their performance. Finally, the resolution calls for the Administrator of Nuclear Security to take immediate action to improve procedures for the safeguarding of classified nuclear weapons information and correct all identified nuclear weapons security deficiencies within the Administration. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Spence on June 27, 2000 and the Committee on Armed Services reported the it by voice vote on July 12, 2000.

**H.R. 728** adds a section to the Watershed Protection and Flood Act (*P.L. 566*) to authorize a five-year program to rehabilitate aging floodwater retention projects. Title I of the bill provides the Agriculture Secretary with the funds to provide financial assistance to local organizations for rehabilitation of local watershed initiatives, usually dams. The federal assistance is limited to 65 percent of total rehabilitation costs, but cannot exceed 100 percent of construction costs. The local organization is responsible for all water, mineral and resource rights, as well as obtaining all permits. Title I also: (1) authorizes federal assistance to local organizations in planning and implementing rehabilitation projects; (2) establishes an application process for local organizations to apply for assistance; (3) prohibits assistance from being provided if it is needed as a result of inadequate maintenance; and (4) instructs the Agriculture Secretary to conduct an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of covered water resource projects in states where the projects are located. The bill provides \$90 million dollars over the period FY 2001-2005 to fund the project and requires the Agriculture Secretary to maintain a database to track the benefits derived from rehabilitation projects and submit an annual report to Congress on activities under the bill.

Title II of the bill directs the Secretary of the Army to inventory dams constructed by the Works Progress Administration, the Works Projects Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and assess the condition of the dams and their need for rehabilitation or modification. No later than two years after enactment of this measure the Secretary of the Army must give to Congress a report containing the inventory and assessments.

If during the inventory the Secretary of the Army determines that a dam presents an imminent and substantial risk to public safety the Secretary is authorized to carry out measures to mitigate the risk. Any federal funds to mitigate this risk cannot be more than 65 percent of total rehabilitation costs and cannot be spent on dams under the control of the Interior Department. The measure authorizes \$25 million for expenses incurred under Title II of the bill. At press time, a CBO cost estimate was not available. H.R. 728 was introduced by Mr. Lucas (OK) on February 11, 1999 and reported by voice vote from the Transportation Committee on November 18, 199 and the Agriculture Committee on April 4, 2000.

**H.Con.Res. 319** resolves that Congress congratulates Latvia on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniver-

sary of the reestablishment of its independence and the role it played in the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. Also, Congress commends Latvia for its success in implementing political and economic reforms, which may further speed the process of that country's integration into European and Western institutions. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Shimkus on May 4, 2000 and it was reported by voice vote on June 29, 2000 from the House Committee on International Relations.

**H. Res. 531** condemns the 1994 attack on the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina and urges the Argentine Government to punish those responsible. In addition the bill calls on the President to raise this issue in bilateral discussions with Argentina and recommends that the United States Representative to the Organization of American States seek support from the countries comprising the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism to assist in the investigation of this terrorist attack. If a request for assistance is made by Argentina, this resolution encourages the President to direct United States law enforcement agencies to provide investigative support and cooperation to the Government of Argentina.

On July 18, 1994, 86 people were killed and another 300 were wounded when the AMIA Jewish Community Center was bombed in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The six years following the bombing have been marked by acknowledged negligence, stonewalling and apparent anti-Semitism by Argentinian investigative and security forces. The Government of Argentina officially condemns terrorism, but the failure to duly punish the culprits of this act serves merely to reward these terrorists and helps spread the plague of terrorism throughout the world. The resolution was introduced by Ms. Ros-Lehtinen, on June 23, 2000 and was reported from the International Relations Committee by voice vote on June 29, 2000.



## **Bills Subject to a Rule**

### **H.R. 4810—Marriage Penalty Tax Elimination Reconciliation Act (Resolving Differences with the Senate)**

**Floor Situation:** The House is scheduled to consider H.R. 728 following consideration of the bills under suspension of the rules. On Thursday, July 13, 2000, the Rules Committee granted a rule waiving the two-thirds majority vote required to consider a rule on the same day it is reported. This rule will be applied to a special rule to be reported on Monday, July 17, 2000, allowing for consideration or disposition of any Senate amendments to H.R. 4810, the Marriage Penalty Tax Elimination Reconciliation Act of 2000.

The Senate is scheduled to consider the Marriage Penalty Tax Elimination legislation, H.R. 4810, today.. Additional information regarding a rule and any amendments approved by the Senate will be available in a *Floor Prep* prior to floor consideration.

**Summary:** As passed by the House, H.R. 4810 contains several initiatives to reduce the impact of

the “marriage penalty” inherent in the tax code. Specifically, the bill provides \$182.3 billion in marriage penalty tax relief over 10 years (\$50.7 billion over five years) by changing the tax code in the following manner:

\* **Increasing the Standard Deduction.** The measure increases the standard deduction for married couples to twice that of single taxpayers beginning in 2001, providing \$66.2 billion in tax relief over 10 years. In 2000, the standard deduction amounts to \$4,400 for single taxpayers but just \$7,350 for married couples who file jointly (*e.g.*, were the bill effective in 2000, the standard deduction would amount to \$8,800, double the \$4,400 amount for singles).

\* **Expanding the 15 Percent Tax Bracket.** H.R. 4810 increases the 15 percent tax bracket for married couples who file jointly to twice that of single taxpayers beginning in 2003, phased in over six years (providing \$104.7 billion in tax relief over 10 years). Under current law, the 15 percent bracket covers taxpayers with taxable income up to \$26,250 for singles and \$43,850 for married couples filing jointly. If the measure were in effect today, married couples would pay the 15 percent tax rate on their first \$52,500 of taxable income, instead of on their first \$43,850 under current law.

\* **Increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit.** Beginning in 2001, the bill increases by \$2,000 the amount a joint-filing couple may earn before their earned income tax credit benefits begin to phase out. This provision provides \$11.4 billion in tax relief over 10 years. The proposal increases EITC payments to existing family recipients and makes additional families eligible for the credit.

Married couples generally are treated as one unit that must pay taxes on the couple’s total taxable income. Although they may elect to file separate returns, the rate schedules and other provisions are structured in such a way that filing separate returns usually results in a higher tax than filing a joint return. Other rate schedules apply to single persons and to single heads of households.

CBO did not complete a cost estimate for the bill. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates for enactment of H.R. 6 are available at [www.house.gov/jct/x-6/00.pdf](http://www.house.gov/jct/x-6/00.pdf) and [www.house.gov/jct/x-3-00.pdf](http://www.house.gov/jct/x-3-00.pdf). H.R. 4810 passed the House by a vote of 269-159 on July 12, 2000.

**Additional Information: See *Legislative Digest* Vol. XXIX, #20, July 14, 2000**



To subscribe to this publication via e-mail, please send an e-mail to [LegDigest@mail.house.gov](mailto:LegDigest@mail.house.gov) and type subscribe.

---

Eric Hultman: *Managing Editor*

Brendan Shields: *Senior Legislative Analyst*

Courtney Haller, Jennifer Lord  
& Greg Mesack: *Legislative Analysts*

**FloorPrep**  
**Legislative Digest**